

## Midwest Fatality Experience on All Roads

In the Midwest, as of the end of 2001, five states had raised their speed limits beyond 65 mph (Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska and South Dakota) and three states did not (Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin). Speed Limits were not only raised on Interstate roadways, but also expressways and many rural two-lane roadways.

Since four out of the five states who raised their speed limits beyond 65 mph had five years of fatality data following the speed limit increase, a study was conducted using the last five years preceding the speed limit change (1991 to 1995) and the first five years following the speed limit change (1996 to 2000). Data from Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin, which did not increase their speed limits above 65 mph, were also included in this study for comparison purposes. Minnesota changed its speed limits in 1997, so the years 1993 to 1996 are used as the latest four years before the speed limit change and 1997 to 2000 are used as the four years “after” the speed limit change. Table 13 displays average annual fatalities for the states surveyed.

**Table 13 Five Year Fatality Averages for the Periods Before and After Raising Speed Limits: 1991-1995, 1996-2000**

States that did NOT change Speed Limits Beyond 65 mph				States that DID Change Speed Limits Beyond 65 mph			
Average Annual Fatalities				Average Annual Fatalities			
State	1991-95	1996-00	Change	State	1991-95	1996-00	Change
Iowa	477	463	-14	Kansas	422	493	+71
Illinois	1473	1428	-45	Minnesota	589	625	+36
Wisconsin	724	749	+25	Missouri	1028	1152	+124
				Nebraska	261	296	+35
				South Dakota	151	162	+11
Totals	2674	2635	-34	Totals	2451	2728	+277
Ave.Change (per state)			-11.3	Ave. Change (per state)			+55.4

Table 13 includes Iowa and the six surrounding states and Kansas. As stated earlier, five of the states have raised some of their speed limits above 65 mph; three states have not. This table displays the average yearly fatalities for the years 1991-1995 (before) and 1996-2000 (after). The one exception is Minnesota, who raised their speed limits in 1997. The data years for Minnesota are 1993-1996 (before) and 1997-2000 (after). These fatality numbers were used to calculate the percentage rate of increase and decrease in traffic fatalities for the states in the study (see table 13).



**Table 14 Change in Total Traffic Fatalities from 1991-95 to 1996-2000**

States That Did <b>NOT</b> Change Speed Limits Above 65 mph		States That <b>DID</b> Change Speed Limits Above 65 mph	
Iowa	-3%	Kansas	+14%
Illinois	-3%	Minnesota	+ 6%
Wisconsin	+3%	Missouri	+11%
		Nebraska	+12%
		South Dakota	+ 7%
Overall Change	-1.3%	Overall Change	+10.2%

Table 14 shows that the five year average for fatalities in Iowa and Illinois (states that did not increase their speed limits beyond 65 mph) decreased. The four states that have five years of experience with speed limits higher than 65 mph show an increase in traffic deaths that ranges from nearly 7% to 14%. Minnesota, which only has four years worth of data after raising its speed limits, had an increase of 6%. Wisconsin, which did not raise its speed limits beyond 65 mph was the only state in that group to show an increase in traffic deaths.

An analysis of fatalities from 1992 to 1995 and 1996 to 2000 reveals the collective fatality experience for Midwest states that did not raise speed limits above 65 mph was a 1.3 percent decline in traffic deaths, while states that did raise speed limits above 65 mph experienced a 10.2 percent increase in traffic fatalities.

These Multi-year data are consistent with both multi-year data published in last year's report and the single year data produced for the previous years' reports. Preliminary data for the year 2001 shows a continuation of the trends found in this report.